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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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There's almost nothing better than a week of vacation with perfect weather to go with it! It's been a great vacation so far; it's hard to believe that it's already half over! I've got a lot things done so far, and yet more to go. No complaints here, though. The gardens are filling up with flowers, the lawn (or meadow!) has finally been cut for the first time this year, and some other projects are done. I still have to do some more planting, and get my vegetable gardens ready for planting. The cover on the pool has to be cleaned of leaves, acorns, and water so we can get ready to open it at the end of the month. Finish the flooring in my two new rooms, do some painting, and a little "pack-rat" cleaning in the inside. Don't worry - there's plenty of relaxation throughout everything. Even a few rounds of golf!

So, last week you thought my comments were a little "squirrely", did you?! Well, they may have vacated the premises on their own, hopefully. I haven't heard them in the walls for a few days. That could be a good thing, or bad. Bad, if they got trapped in the walls and died. I guess I'll know that in a few days if the house begins to smell. Good, if they're gone, it will save me some big money paid to trap and get rid of them. I guess I'll have to make a decision in the next couple of days.

In the meantime, I guess I'll put my stuff together for a round of golf on Friday, have a few beers tonight and sit out in the new sunroom enjoying a nice cool breeze. This is the life!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and Mother Nature is again "messing" with us here in the Northeast. Yesterday saw temperatures up near 90. Today was a little better, but it was still

quite a bit warmer than normal.

But let’s face it... none of us is thinking about the weather these days. If you’re like me, you’re thinking about the pictures coming out of Iraq these days. Now we hear that there are MORE pictures. The Congress and Senate got a chance to view the new additions today, and most of them showed a clear disgust at what they say.

Hell, _I_ am showing disgust, and I’ve only seen two pictures. But it’s not really the pictures that disgust me. It’s the fact that it happened at all. Yes, I’ve heard people say a number of silly things about the situation too. Everything from the opinion that this sort of humiliation is a valid interrogation technique to The Geneva Convention being outdated to the situation still not being as bad as under Saddam.

Unfortunately, The Geneva Convention is not a rule or a law, it’s a belief. It is a belief that all people are entitled to proper care and a modicum of dignity... and the fact that things might have been worse under the rule of Saddam should highlight only one thing to us... WE ARE NOT SADDAM. If we have become what we have beheld, we may have no one else to blame but ourselves, but I tend to think that there is much more to not only this particular chapter, but the whole convoluted novel. Unlike with most novels, we can’t simply turn to the last page and see how everything turns out, so we’re left with only one option: learning from our mistakes.

Well, I’ve got much more to say on the subject, but I won’t bore you with it. So let’s get to the news and stuff from the UseNet, okay?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Roderick Hero asks for help with a hard drive and CDROM:

"Well, this was a bad night. Many hours trying to install a CDROM drive on my 1040STfm with no luck. Let me explain,

1. I have a Link II SCSI adapter connected to an external case with a 320MB SCSI hard drive. It was working alright (till today)

2. Now, I added another external bay with the CDROM, so I got the system as follows:

1. ICD Link II -------> 2. 320MB HDD ---------> 3. CDROM

Configuration summary:
1. HDD is ID 5 and CDROM is ID 3.
2. HDD has termination resistors off and Termination Power ON (the Light on the ICD is on, as always).
3. CDROM has TERMINATION and TERM POWER OFF. Parity OFF as the HDD.

When I turn on everything, the Atari wont boot from the HDD. So if I use a floppy disc, it loads ICDBOOT.SYS and sometimes it finds all the partitions on the HDD (C, D, E,F) and sometimes it only finds C and D for example...

It’s just so weird!!! I don’t know what to do. Am I missing something?

Why it wont boot from the hdd!!!??? Please help me because as soon I solve this problem, I'm sure I'll have to start spending hours trying to make the CDROM to work...

Any idea?"

Robert Schaffner tells Roderick:

"With HDDriver (example):

```
ID7                  ID1                    ID2
                    Termination OFF        Termination ON
                    Termpower ON            Termpower ON
                    Parity OFF              Parity OFF
ICD Link II -------> 2. 320MB HDD ---------> 3. CDROM
```

First start SCSI chain, after few seconds, start your atari.

Your CD drive need an driver like ExtenDOS, SPIN etc.
(First is the best!)

Both, hd and cd must be found with the scsi ids. If not, check scsi cable, termination, parity.

I can't say anything about ICD devices and drivers.
Save desktop.inf to C: and the C: partition must be marked as boot drive on ICD hd driver. (Save to C:, not on floppy disk) That's all."

Greg Goodwin adds:

"That might work, but I'd advise trying Termination ON on BOTH drives. The ICD Link, IIRC is not a terminator. Also, I think that your HD needs a LOWER number than the CD. This is because the ICD driver (again, IIRC) attempts to boot from the first ID number it finds. I have a setup that has an internal drive set to ID 1 and and external set to ID 0. If the external isn't on, the internal drive boots. If the external is on, then it boots. Unlike HDDriver, I don't believe that the boot order for ICD can be changed in software. Even if it can, I'm sure that's not the default setting.

SCSI cables can be fragile, and I've had some that once worked fine stop working once I had moved them across the room. I suppose something in the connectors became damaged, but the point is should termination not be the solution, try new cabling. Also note that you will need some sort of CD driver to actually use the CD-ROM. (I use ExtenDOS myself.)

Once you get the hard drive working reliably, run the utility software (... HDUTIL, ICDUTIL, ICDTOOLS ... I can't remember the name of the program exactly). One of your options will be to make partitions bootable."

Peter Schneider corrects Greg:

"No, the logical numbering and the physical sequence don't interfere at all.

'Coda' jumps in and adds:

"You say Termination in off on the HDD and ON on the CD. Is there actually physical resistor packs on either the CD or HDD? Why is the termpower ON on the HD drive, and OFF on the CD? I am assuming the from your diagram the CD is the last in the chain. Try it the other way round. On my Falcon, I have a 1GB JAZ on ID0 term OFF, and the CD drive is chained to the JAZ, ID6 term power ON. It works perfectly.

Also, I don’t know about ICD but on a lot of SCSI PC systems, the HDD that you boot from needs to be ID0. I know that my 1GB JAZ will boot from whatever ID I put it on the falc, but thats with HDDriver, which is a much better SCSI driver. I tend to put all hard drives from ID0 upwards, and CDs/Tapestreamers from ID6 downwards."

Edward Baiz asks Roderick:

"What CD rom driver are you using? I have the same setup for my STe except I am using HDDrive and not the ICD software. I also use Extendos Gold to drive my CD Rom drive. Does the ICD software acknowledge the CD drive when it boot? If not, it may be the Link cable. That is what happened to me. For some reason, my Link cable was bad and had to be adjusted."

Roderick replies:

"I swapped the drives (CDROM first with ID 3, HDD last with id 0) and now the HDD works, HDDRIVER loads ALL my partitions and automatically boots!!!!

Again thanks, BUT!

I got problems with Extendos...

After days of trying to make work my SCSI chain, it seems to be no problems... I installed ExtenDOS with CDROM SCSI ID 3 and it loads alright but when I mount and try to access the P drive (the CDROM) I get a "Drive no responding error"....

I think this will take me some more days of painful investigation... Any idea where to start?"

Wayne Martz tells Roderick:

"I’d start by checking with the folks at Anodyne. They always been exceptionally helpful to me!"

’Sam F.’ asks Roderick:

"Are you sure the cd is okay?"

Roderick replies:

"No, I’m not. I bought it second hand last week,...

Could still be a problem of my scsi chain? (termination... etc)."

Sam clarifies:

"Sorry, I’m not speaking of the cd drive but rather the cd itself.

But it could be that the drive is bad.

For the longest time I had problems with 2 drives. Got a third newer drive and it works perfectly fine now.

So if you can, get hold of another cd drive and try it."

Well folks, that’s it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Phantom Console to Launch!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Nintendo’s New ’DS’ Console!
  Sony’s New PSP!! PS2 Price Cut!
  And much more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Infinium Labs Sets Launch for Phantom Console

Infinium Labs Inc., the long-secretive video-game company, on Monday took the wraps off of its Phantom gaming console and service, setting a Nov. 18 launch for the system designed to play conventional PC games on televisions.

Sarasota, Florida-based Infinium said its hardware would be free with a two-year subscription to its service or $199 without the subscription.

The announcement came at the start of E3, the annual video game industry trade show in Los Angeles.

Infinium executives hope that finally taking the wraps off the Phantom, and demonstrating a functional version of the service, would dispel doubts

among some industry observers that the company can deliver on its planned offering.

"I know all too well the skepticism and the cynicism and the jokes and the rumors and all that stuff," Kevin Bachus, the president of Infinium, told Reuters recently.

Bachus, an industry veteran who once held a senior role on Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox team, was appointed in January.

The service, starting at $29.95 a month, will offer users certain basic content for free, and access to either buy premium games at prices comparable to regular retail or rent them, usually $5 for three days.

"When I look at the company, what I see is a services company," Bachus said. "People were excited about the idea, but they were skeptical about the company’s ability to execute."

The console features a PC-like architecture, with 256 megabytes of random access memory and a 40 gigabyte hard drive, running an embedded version of Windows XP. It will use a custom controller and support surround sound and high-definition TV.

But Bachus downplayed the capabilities of the hardware, saying the real focus was the gaming service.

"It’s kind of a fool’s errand to try and chase the PC," he said.

The company is reaching out to game publishers, seeking licenses to offer their games on the service. It is also seeking deals with retailers, who would share in the revenue from new customers activated in their stores.

Infinium also has an advisory board looking at issues like content security, to make sure games are not pirated. One member of that board is Andrew "Bunnie" Huang, famous in hardware circles for hacking the Xbox’s security system.

But in the interim, the company acknowledges that it will face an uphill battle winning over a marketplace that has doubts it will ever launch.

"For us to be successful at E3, we’ve got to be credible, and we’ve got to convince people we’re a real company with a product shipping this year," Bachus said.

Nintendo Unveils New ’DS’ Handheld with Two Screens

Japanese video gamemaker Nintendo Co. Ltd. on Tuesday took the wraps off its new handheld game machine with two screens in a bid to fend off Sony Corp’s entry into the portable gaming market.

The new game player, called Nintendo DS (Dual Screen), features two three-inch liquid crystal display (LCD) screens, one above the other. It also offers wireless communication capabilities.

One of the two screens is touch-sensitive and works with a pen-like device, often used in personal digital assistants. Nintendo DS plays existing Game Boy Advance software, while offering a separate cartridge slot for the new

DS games.

No details about a launch date or pricing for the DS was immediately available. Moreover, The company said that DS will probably not be the device’s final name.

Nintendo holds about 90 percent of the handheld games market with its Game Boy lineup, which is supported by a strong lineup of in-house games like its "Pokemon" titles.

The Kyoto-based game maker, however, faces its most serious competition to date with the expected launch of Sony’s PlayStation Portable (PSP) that promises to play games, movies and music.

Sony is expected to show off the PSP later on Tuesday. It has targeted a PSP launch in Japan before year-end, and a launch in Europe and the U.S. by March 2005.

Sony Cuts PS2 Price, Shows Off PSP

Sony Corp. on Tuesday cut the price of its leading PlayStation 2 video game console to $149, putting it in line with Microsoft Corp.’s Xbox whose sales soared recently following a similar move.

In a press conference at E3, the video game industry’s annual trade show, Sony also showed off its PlayStation Portable handheld device, but did not set a price for the device or a firm release date.

Sony, one of the world’s biggest consumer electronics makers, said it would quickly start promoting the new price, which applies to both its stand-alone PS2, which had been $179, and the PS2 bundled with a networking adapter, which was $199.

"We view the 2004 opportunity as really the year to cultivate the casual gaming market," Kaz Hirai, the president and chief executive of Sony Computer Entertainment of America, told a packed audience at a downtown studio complex.

"There is plenty of room for growth as we expand our reach into the casual gaming market," he said.

Late in April, Sony forecast PS2 sales in the business year ending March 2005 would fall as much as 30 percent, a sharper decline than analysts had expected.

Industry analysts had suggested that if Sony did not lower the PS2 price to spur sales, U.S. software makers might find sales growth targets harder to reach.

As of mid-day Tuesday, Web sites of major online game retailers already reflected the new price. Sony has lowered the PS2 price in May for the past two years.

Sony also demonstrated the PlayStation Portable, first announced a year ago and set to be released by the end of 2004 in Japan and by March 2005 in the United States and Europe.

Ken Kutaragi, group CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, told Reuters the company was likely to announce launch and pricing details around the Tokyo Game Show in late September.

The PSP, which will weigh in at just over 9 ounces (260 grams) and feature a 4.3-inch screen in a wide-screen format, will be targeted initially at men ages 18 to 34 years-old.

"The initial target audience for PSP is more reminiscent of our approach in the home console space," Hirai said, noting the PS2 went after the same group at its late-2000 launch.

The PSP uses Wi-Fi wireless networking and has battery life from 2 hours to 10 hours depending on usage.

Sony executives showed a number of games, a promotional trailer for the movie "Spider-Man 2" and a music video from the alternative rock band Incubus.

Sony executives said they would encourage movie and music companies to adopt its "UMD," a new disc designed for the PSP with about three times the data capacity of a standard CD.

In the online game arena. Hirai said Sony would begin offering services like hosting, billing, as well as unified login and passwords for Web-based video games.

He said Sony wants to generate revenue from what he called "mini-transactions" - small extras downloaded into games or new features for games already on store shelves.

"Right now non-revenue-generating, head-to-head gameplay is the norm, but not for long," He said. "We believe revenue from online content will be a reality in this cycle."

Hirai said Sony is adding 100,000 new online users per month and the company was looking at a content-storage system for downloads on the PS2 that did not require use of the recently-released 40 gigabyte, PS2 hard drive.

Activision, Id Set Summer Launch for ’Doom 3’

Video game publisher Activision Inc. and games developer id Software on Tuesday said that the highly anticipated game "Doom 3" will be released this summer.

"Doom 3," which was previewed during the E3 video game industry trade show two years ago, will be released for personal computers this summer. An Xbox version of the game is also expected this year.

The two companies made the announcement during the E3 show in Los Angeles.

Fans have awaited the release of the game for years, given the long and successful history of titles like "Doom" and "Quake" from id, whose top games designer John Carmack is considered a legend in his field. Carmack also designed "Doom 3."

Last week, Activision said that for financial planning purposes it was assuming the game would be released in the quarter ending in September, though it cautioned that final control of the release was out of its hands.

In the past, when asked when the game would be out, id officials have said only "when it's done."

In a statement, the two companies said that "Doom 3" would be released "this summer," but gave no specific date.

'Doom' Creator Id Soon to Start on New Game

Video game developer id Software, famed creators of games like "Doom" and "Quake," will likely start work on its new project almost immediately after completing four years of work on "Doom 3," its chief executive said on Wednesday.

In an interview with Reuters on the sidelines of the video game industry trade show E3 here, Todd Hollenshead said that the game in question was new intellectual property, and was not a "Doom," "Quake" or "Wolfenstein" game.

He offered few details on the style or content of the game, other than to say the id team would start serious work on it in short order, possibly a matter of days, after moving on from the PC and later Xbox releases of the new "Doom."

"Doom 3" is one of the most highly anticipated PC games ever, one which fans have awaited for years. Through that time, the company has had to balance that intense demand with the desire of its creative staff to continue enhancing and polishing the game.

"It's very flattering," Hollenshead said. "Anybody who says they're not looking for affirmation from their fans are not being serious or straight with you."

The game was a feature attraction at E3 in 2002, drawing lines that wrapped around the booth of game publisher Activision Inc., but less visible last year, and it was only this week that privately owned id confirmed the game would come out sometime this summer.

Hollenshead said that while he could not put a firm date yet on the game's launch, the summer window was not just an approximate guess.

"It's more gospel than that," he said. "At this point the team back in Mesquite (Texas) is literally working on finishing."

Id's John Carmack is one of the legends of the gaming industry, credited with major advances in game graphics, and "Doom 3," with its exploding zombie heads and dark corridors, furthers that reputation.

Computer makers and computer graphics companies use games like "Doom 3," which are intensive users of system resources, to promote their most expensive and powerful hardware.

Many have sought the endorsement of Carmack, but Hollenshead denied claims that his blessing could be bought.

"It is a technical meritocracy," he said.

Activision plans on the game being a major part of its release schedule for the year, and will spend accordingly to support its launch.

"It'll be one of the biggest budgets, if not the biggest budget, we've ever had for a PC release," Chief Executive Bobby Kotick said.

Microsoft to Launch Arcade Games for Xbox

Microsoft Corp. on Monday said it will offer a lineup of arcade, puzzle and card games on its Xbox Live online service, targeted at infrequent video game players.

The move was aimed squarely at broadening its audience for the Xbox by bringing in older adults and women, many of whom would not usually spend much time in front of a gaming console and are looking for a simpler diversion than the types of games typically available today.

Microsoft said starting this fall, Xbox Live Arcade would offer a range of puzzle and board games and older arcade titles, with pricing roughly set at $10 each. Players will need to have an existing subscription to the Xbox Live service to access the games.

Greg Canessa, who oversees the new program for the Xbox, said the company will develop some of the games itself but has also done deals with third parties like Atari Inc., Namco Ltd., PopCap Games and WildTangent.

To initially access the service, users will need a DVD, which will be widely available either on its own or included in the Xbox Live starter kit Microsoft sells.

"We're still working out the details of the distribution strategy," he said. "We intend to put that DVD into a lot of people's hands."

The announcement came hours ahead of the company's annual press conference at E3, the video game industry trade show that draws more than 60,000 people to Los Angeles for a week of news and previews on the latest in games and gaming hardware.

Among the titles that potentially would be offered on the service, Canessa said, were games like PopCap's popular "Bejeweled" and Atari arcade classics like "DigDug" and "Pole Position."

He also said the new service would offer poker and billiards games, and said the company's long-term strategy was to embrace competition in those games, like poker tournaments, which have become something of a spectator sport over the last couple of years.

"We would love to go there, absolutely," he said.

Xbox Live, launched in late 2002, is expected to have about 1 million subscribers by this summer. Its appeal has primarily been to sports gamers and fans of military-themed shooters, who are more likely to engage in multiplayer activity.

Colleges Offering Video Game Studies

Playing video games is no longer just a pastime of young boys. Now it’s also homework for American college students.

Thanks to the growing place of games in mainstream entertainment, universities across the nation are now offering classes in video game design, hoping to teach students skills for a career in a business that now generates roughly as much revenue as Hollywood’s domestic box office receipts.

This fall, students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York - internationally known for its mathematicians and engineering programs - can minor in video game studies, said Kathleen Ruiz, co-director of the new program.

"Games are an important part of culture and are here to stay," said Ruiz, a digital artist who teaches a class where students play and design video games. Ruiz created a nonviolent game called "Bang, Bang (You’re Not Dead?)."

Ruiz’ class will be included in the new minor, and students will work on games that get away from the traditional "shooter" games, which largely focus on war, and criminal adventure games like the ultra-popular "Grand Theft Auto."

The new program is one of many at major universities across the country. The University of Southern California recently announced a partnership with the world’s largest video game publisher, Electronic Arts, to create a program in video game design that will offer a master’s degree in fine arts.

Other institutions offering classes in video game studies include Princeton, Carnegie Mellon University, Massachusetts Institution of Technology, and the University of California at Irvine. There are also specialized schools, like DigiPen in Redmond, Washington, that teach nothing but game design.

Now that more women are playing video games, they also are entering the video gaming field as designers and programmers, said Ralph Noble, associate professor of cognitive science who will be incorporating some of his psychology classes for the game studies program, which will involve 100 students.

"Computer games are being played by soccer moms in between running around," Noble said.

Contrary to popular assumptions about game players, the average age of regular gamers is 29 years old, and statistically, there are more women over the age of 18 playing games than teen-age boys.

Games like "The Sims," where players build virtual people who live in a vast world with families, friends, houses and entertainment events, have made video games more enticing to a wider audience than young boys, Ruiz said.

Noble also said the industry is struggling to devise new games with mass appeal. As a result, he and Ruiz hope their students will design the video

games of the future.

"The challenge now is to make games more realistic," said Marc DeStefano, an RPI alum and co-director of the game studies program. "Within 10 years, the technology and graphics will be as good as they are ever going to get."

The RPI course will include classes in motivation and performance, 3-D animation, computer music, acting and basic drawing.

At Ruiz' recent experimental game design class, small groups of students worked together because in the "real" world, it takes 20-50 people working for a year to create a new game, he said. The students' final grade is based largely on the game they develop.

Students are from a variety of disciplines, including computer programming, architecture and electronic arts. They also bring musical talents and scientific knowledge to the "drawing table," which is a laptop computer.

The class takes place in an art studio where students work on couches and enjoy coffee and doughnuts as they create sci-fi and adventure games.

One group called the Blue Screen of Life designed an intellectual game called "Paragon," where characters try to cope with life in a virtual town as players make choices that help them have the best experience.

"We hope to give each character a script that is specific to their 'mood,"' said Sera Galvin, a senior from Bloomville, N.Y. "If you are consistently rude to someone in the town, this might mean the person will become increasingly hostile to you."

"Activating Play" is another innovative computer game that uses cell phone and global satellite positioning technology to play it. The character is a person who is running for the office of mayor in the city of Troy. The player has to learn all about the city before he or she can be elected.

"I started playing games on my dad's old PC when I was in elementary school," said Matt Giacomazzo, a junior from Wayne, Maine. "Now I design the music for them."

Giacomazzo and his team created the game "Synergy," which uses a lap-top and a dance pad popularized in malls to play the game with different blobs of slime bouncing around the screen. The player has to grab as many blobs as he or she can to win.

Since video game design is in high demand at RPI, school officials may decide to make it a major in the near future, Ruiz said.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Canada Eyes World Treaty to Deal with Spammers

Countries may need international treaties to deal with large-scale computer spam, because individual governments cannot deal with the problem by themselves, Canada said on Tuesday.

Canada heads the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's working party on information security and privacy.

Canada's Industry Minister Lucienne Robillard told Reuters there was an urgent need for an international effort, perhaps a treaty, that might even include the extradition of suspected large-scale spammers.

"I think that the working group at the OECD has to find an innovative solution...we have to consider all alternatives (including extradition)," Robillard said.

Fraudulent e-mails designed to draw credit card and bank details from Internet users passed the three billion mark in April, according to San Francisco-based Brightmail, one of the largest spam e-mail filtering firms.

Microsoft Corp. and AOL, a unit of Time Warner Inc., blocked 2.4 billion spam e-mails each day on average last year, Robillard said, adding that Ottawa would consider new legislation, if recommended by a committee of industry, consumers and government she presented on Tuesday.

"Alone, country by country, we cannot solve this problem. What's the solution here? Is it an international treaty, is it something else? What can we do all together," Robillard said, adding that 19 in 20 spam e-mails Canadians receive come from abroad.

Officials said the treaty idea is also being discussed at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

"There's a lot of work going on to make sure that competition agencies are cooperating on enforcement," Industry Canada's director general of e-commerce Richard Simpson said.

"The parallel here is on tax treaties which countries use in the enforcement of taxation and countering other forms of activities like money laundering," Simpson said.

The Canadian officials pointed to continued proliferation of spam in the United States despite spam legislation as showing the need for more enforcement and self-regulation.

Microsoft last week said it adopted an e-mail program to protect the inboxes of its Hotmail and MSN services, which together claim 170 million regular users, by requiring marketers to put money up front if they wish to ensure their messages aren't mistaken for unwanted spam.

Spammer's Court Win Short-Lived

The e-mail marketing firm OptInRealBig.com will take its complaint against SpamCop to court next week over negative reporting of its activities. Meanwhile, a court reversed itself on Tuesday and has yanked a temporary

restraining order against SpamCop to cease reporting complaints against OptInRealBig.

On Monday, SpamCop filed its papers refuting OptInRealBig's request for a restraining order, but only after Federal Judge Saundra Brown Armstrong had issued the order.

SpamCop provides a service that allows users to identify unsolicited bulk e-mails, which SpamCop uses to file reports with network administrators. The idea is to get spammers in trouble as often as possible. SpamCop says that senders of unsolicited bulk e-mails can lose their accounts or be charged clean up fees by their ISPs.

OptInRealBig, run by Scott Richter - dubbed the "Spam King" by his detractors - sued SpamCop and its parent firm IronPort last month. The complaint alleges that SpamCop was hurting OptInRealBig's business.

The company lists rules, which appear to follow the guidelines for e-mail marketing customers set by the CAN-SPAM Act that became law at the beginning of the year. OptInRealBig, which says it has a database of 45 million online consumers, forbids its clients to use spoofed addresses or to send messages that are fraudulent, harassing or malicious.

On its Web site, the company says: "You may not distribute, publish, or send ... unsolicited promotions, advertising or solicitations (commonly referred to as "spam") ... to those e-mail addresses who have requested that their e-mail addresses be opted out."

Many anti-spammers hate the CAN-SPAM law. They say it does nothing more than protect spammers who stay within its narrow boundaries. Trouble is, according to watchdogs like SpamHaus, anything but outlawing spam altogether gives spammers too much room to operate.

But that may be the price of a free society where unsolicited messages - legal and illegal - abound in the form of media advertising, billboards, junk mail, graffiti, petitions, and even the booming invasion of car stereos. We accept these as facts of life. But they highlight an uncomfortable question: Is it okay to make an exception and forbid freedom of speech in e-mail networks?

"This is one of the hardest questions we're wrestling with," said Deb Fallows, who researches spam issues for the Pew Internet and American Life Project. "There's a lot of fuzziness around the edges that makes reaching consensus on how high a price is tolerable even harder," she told NewsFactor.

According to BrightMail, a maker of enterprise anti-spam products, only 27 percent of all spam is fraudulent or contains adult content. The rest is comparable to what one might receive as paper junk mail, such as ads in categories like products, financial services, health aids, Internet and leisure.

The legislators who wrote the CAN-SPAM Act decided that the sending of messages with such content should not be illegal, as long as the receiver has a chance to opt out. "I suppose you could call [receiving an unsolicited e-mail once] a 'small price' that we're paying," Fallows commented.

Still, it is clear that Scott Richter and his firm OptInRealBig will be judged by two standards: the law, and the sentiment of those who wish all

spam to go away. Technology experts say there is no chance for the latter as spammers exploit improving technologies or go offshore.

The only realistic options might be to stay one step ahead of the spammers technologically or just unplug.

Another Sasser Worm Appears Despite Teen’s Arrest

Despite the arrest Friday of an 18-year-old in Germany accused of creating the Sasser worm, another variant rolled onto the Internet a few hours after he was detained.

Security experts are undecided whether the new variant, dubbed Sasser.e, indicated that the arrested teen was actually working alone - the "lone coder" theory put forward by, among others, Microsoft - or was part of a group. If it’s the latter, additional versions could be forthcoming.

According to wire service reports, however, German police claim that Sasser.e is the work of Sven Jaschan, the man arrested Friday. Frank Federau, a spokesman for the state criminal office in Hanover, said the suspect likely created it "immediately before his discovery."

The confusion may lie in timing: Sasser.e was first noticed nearly four hours after Jaschan’s arrest. But that may only mean anti-virus firms didn’t spot it immediately.

"However, since Sasser.e spreads really fast, there must be even earlier spottings," said the Finnish security firm F-Secure in an alert posted to its Web site Sunday.

Other analysts took a different tack, and believed that the debut of Sasser.e meant Jaschan was not acting alone.

"This confirms our fears that [Jaschan] is not the only person programming the Sasser and Netsky worms, but rather it is an organized group of delinquents," said Luis Corrons, the head of Panda Software’s virus lab, in a statement. "This seems to indicate that there is a kind of cyberwar being waged among the creators of the Bagle, MyDoom, Netsky, and Sasser worms, and it will continue to cause many more variants of the virus."

Sasser.e - which exploits the same vulnerability in Windows as the previous four variations - attempts to delete several competing worms from infected systems, including Bagle.x and Bagle.w. That trait, however, doesn’t bolster one of the theories over the other, since Jaschan is also alleged to have authored all the Netsky worms, which traditionally took shots at Bagle’s creators by including embedded trash talk in the code or tying to erase Bagle from compromised machines.

New Worm Exploits Sasser Flaw

A new Internet worm is spreading by exploiting a flaw in the Sasser worm, according to an alert issued this week.

The new worm is tentatively named Dabber. It takes advantage of a

vulnerability in an FTP server component in the Sasser worm and may have infected thousands of computers infected with Sasser. Dabber is believed to be the first worm that spreads specifically by targeting a flaw in another worm's code, according to an advisory published by LURHQ, a Chicago-managed security services company.

The worm uses code written to exploit the FTP flaw and was recently released on the Internet. It scans the Internet on port 5554 for computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system and infected with Sasser, LURHQ says.

When it finds vulnerable hosts, it connects to the victim and uses a built-in FTP server to transfer the worm file, named "package.exe," to the system. When run, the Dabber worm installs itself on Windows, shuts down the Sasser worm and other worm processes, then prevents them from running again. Dabber also opens TCP port 9898 as a backdoor, which can be used by a remote attacker to download other code or communicate with the infected host, LURHQ says.

Dabber does not appear to be spreading quickly, but the number of infections is escalating, LURHQ says.

Sasser appeared on May 1, and exploits a recently disclosed hole in a Windows component called the Local Security Authority Subsystem Service, or LSASS. Microsoft released a software patch, MS04-011, on April 13.

Dabber is similar to Sasser and earlier worms like Blaster because users do not need to receive an e-mail message or open a file to be infected. Instead, just having a Sasser-infected Windows machine connected to the Internet is enough to catch Dabber.

Last week, Microsoft acknowledged that more than 1.5 million copies of a Sasser cleanup tool were downloaded from its Web site within the first 48 hours after it was offered.

LURHQ has posted instructions for shutting down and removing Dabber.

Mac Trojan Set Loose-More to Come?

The first malicious Trojan for Mac OS X has been found in the wild, leading some to claim the platform may be on the verge of increased attention from virus writers.

The Trojan-dubbed AS.MW2004.Trojan by anti-virus company Intego-was first discovered by a reader of British Mac magazine MacWorld. It takes the form of a file purporting to be a version of the newly released Office 2004 for Mac and is available on download services such as LimeWire.

However, despite appearing with a legitimate-looking icon, the Trojan is in fact a simple AppleScript application that, when run, erases the contents of the user's Home folder. And, unlike the real release of Office 2004, the application is only 108KB in size.

After being alerted to the existence of the Trojan, Microsoft Corp. issued a statement saying, "Microsoft does not currently offer any Web downloads for Office 2004. When looking for product enhancements from Microsoft customers should always download from www.microsoft.com/mac or use the new

auto-update tool in Microsoft Office 2004 for Mac."

And Apple Computer Inc. was quick to respond, seeking to reassure Mac users concerned over the potential of the Trojan. "This is not a virus, does not propagate itself and has only been found on a peer-to-peer network," said a company spokesman. "This is an example of the perils of seeking illegal software."

This view of AS.MW2004.Trojan was backed by Denis Zenkin, head of corporate communications at anti-virus vendor Kaspersky Labs. "It is definitely not a virus because it has no ability for infecting other files. Ability to propagate is a feature inherent to other types of malicious programs-worms," he said.

However, some commentators said Mac users should not become complacent. "A small number of virus writers are showing an increased interest in Unix, and there have been Unix worms that have spread in the wild," said Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant at anti-virus company Sophos. "For this reason Mac OS X users should not think they have nothing to worry about moving into the future."

Zenkin, though, downplayed the Mac's potential as a future virus target: "We believe there are three conditions for malware to exist within an operating environment," he said. "Firstly, it should be widespread in order to cover a number of virus writers. Secondly, it should be well-documented and provide easy-to-use tools for development of user applications. Thirdly, it should not be well-protected. With Mac OS X, the first condition is not really fulfilled-this operating system is mainly used by professionals who have more important things to do than creating viruses. So we do not expect Mac OS to be a platform for future virus development."

U.S. Arrests 65 in Crackdown on Internet Child Porn

The U.S. government has arrested 65 people and launched more than 1,000 investigations as part of a crackdown on child pornography distribution through Internet file-trading networks, officials said on Friday.

"The Internet is now the marketplace for child pornography, and the Department of Justice is acting to ensure that cyberspace is not a free trafficking zone for purveyors of child pornography and predators of children," Attorney General John Ashcroft said.

The Justice Department and several other agencies are working to combat what they call a growing volume of illegal child pornography traffic through "peer-to-peer" computer networks.

Peer-to-peer networks are used by millions of Internet users to swap files like music, movies and pornography directly from each others' hard drives, bypassing the central server computers that underpin much of the Internet.

"Individuals in such situations are trolling the back alleys and dark corners of the Internet," Ashcroft said. "They are leveraging its technology and anonymity to abuse and exploit the most innocent in our society."

Operators of the networks have condemned the use of peer-to-peer to distribute pornography and have pledged to help prosecutors track down

pedophiles,

Since the initiative was launched late last year, the government has executed more than 350 search warrants around the country and identified nearly 3,400 suspect computers that are distributing pornography through the use of peer-to-peer software, Ashcroft said.

The 65 arrests include charges of offenses related to possession and distribution of child pornography and also with sexually abusing children.

In one case, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents discovered a 19-year-old man in Arizona who said he started using peer-to-peer applications to access music, but later moved on to images and movies of child pornography.

The man used simple search terms to find the materials. He told officials his habit grew by "just clicking" image after image.

Officials said they had also identified and rescued more than 50 "victim children" in the course of the investigation.

Opera 7.50 Reaches Full Release

Opera Software ASA on Wednesday released the latest version of its Web browser, redoing its user interface, expanding its e-mail features and adding support for chat and RSS feeds.

Opera 7.50, which went into beta last month, marks the first release in which the company has synced its browser releases across all operating systems. The move is particularly significant for Mac OS X users, since Opera’s releases of its browser for the Mac had lagged behind versions for Windows and Linux.

Opera Mail, the e-mail client built into the browser, now features faster search of e-mail, a new spellchecker and support for reading Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, the Oslo, Norway, company announced. RSS is a form of Extensible Markup Language syndication popular among Webloggers and Web publishers.

The new browser also sports a redesigned user interface, which includes smaller buttons and a panel selector across the left sides of the browser for quick access to top browser functions. From the panel selector, users can access bookmarks, notes, the Opera Mail client and the new chat feature. Opera added a chat client into 7.50, which supports Internet Relay Chat.

Opera 7.50 is available for $39 without advertising or for free with ads included. The browser runs on Windows, Mac, Linux, FreeBSD and Solaris.

States Speed up Spyware Race

State lawmakers’ eagerness to crack down on Internet "spyware" could force the federal government to move sooner than expected to pass its own law, despite misgivings in the Bush administration and among technology

executives.

Only one state - Utah - has an anti-spyware law, but New York and California both are considering proposals. If enough states pass similar laws, businesses say the resulting "patchwork" of conflicting statutes would be almost impossible to obey, adding further pressure on Congress to act.

"If the states are busy writing laws and particularly if they're writing inconsistent laws or laws that strongly interfere with certain markets, that certainly would strengthen the case for federal legislation," said Howard Beales, the Federal Trade Commission's top consumer protection official, in an interview.

Spyware is a broad term used to define programs that surreptitiously install themselves on people's personal computers where they can collect personal data or display pop-up advertisements. Users often inadvertently download the programs along with free file-sharing software. Some programs display pop-up ads on computer monitors. Other more insidious programs let their creators track everything people do online.

Internet security firm McAfee reported that the number of "potentially unwanted programs" on its customers' computers grew from 643,000 in September 2003 to more than 2.5 million in March. At an April FTC hearing on spyware, witnesses testified that computer users often don't know how the programs got onto their machines or how to remove them.

Congress is considering several bills that would outlaw spyware, including proposals by Reps. Mary Bono (R-Calif.) and Jay Inslee (D-Wash.), as well as Sens. Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.). The bills differ in their specifics, but each would require a consumer's consent before companies or individuals download certain kinds of software onto their computers.

Any national spyware law probably would preempt various state laws, much like the federal Can-Spam Act preempted tougher anti-spam laws in California and Washington. Congress appears ready to push spyware legislation to the front of the line, even though 2004 is an election year when legislators typically spend more time making political hay in their districts than taking care of business on Capitol Hill.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-Texas) promised at a hearing earlier this month that his committee would approve a spyware bill but did not say when this would happen. He also castigated the FTC's Beales and Federal Trade Commissioner Mozelle Thompson for saying that Congress should refrain from passing a bill until it the government can define what "spyware" actually is.

Beales said that Congress should not let the threat of state laws goad it into passing a poorly written bill. "We're certainly better off with the threat of a patchwork than with bad federal legislation and right now we're not sure how to write good federal legislation."

The problem, according to the administration and technology industry lobbyists, is that anti-spyware legislation could have the unintentional effect of restricting the use of some companies' software products. Antivirus programs that automatically download virus updates to PCs could be inadvertently restricted, as could Windows Update, a Microsoft program that automatically downloads patches for the Windows operating system, said VeriSign Inc. Vice President Ken Silva.

"I do think we need to be careful as do the states," Silva said at a spyware briefing on Capitol Hill on Tuesday that was sponsored by the trade association Americans for a Secure Internet. "We're going to end up doing more harm than good if we're not careful."

Utah's law, which restricts spyware and pop-up advertising, went into effect last week. Salt Lake City-based Internet retailer Overstock.com already has used it to file a lawsuit against Massachusetts-based online advertising firm Smartbargains Inc. The case was filed in a state court in Salt Lake City. Internet "adware" company WhenU.com, meanwhile, filed a state court lawsuit in April to get the law overturned.

If California lawmakers enact a similar law, it could jump-start Congress into action, said Emily Hackett, state policy director for the Internet Alliance.

California State Sen. Kevin Murray (D), author of a stringent anti-spam measure, agreed. Murray's bill - which would reach Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's (R) desk as soon as August - would allow Californians to sue companies that install spyware on their computers without providing adequate notice. Consumers could seek $1,000 in damages for each piece of spyware installed.

Murray said he does not mind if his bill gets preempted by a national law as long as it is tough on the criminal use of spyware. The state had a strict law that allowed computer users to sue e-mail spammers, but it was partially overridden by the national Can-Spam Act.

"I don't mind being preempted as long as I'm preempted by something that will actually do something," he said.

Stephen Urquhart (R), the state representative who sponsored the Utah law, said he is worried that a national bill will be ineffective. "I do worry that the preemption will be toothless," he said. "I don't think the feds have thought through what they're doing."

Lawmakers Support Scaling Back Copyright Law

An effort to scale back a controversial copyright law gained momentum Wednesday when a powerful committee chairman said consumers should be allowed to break the digital locks that prevent them from copying DVDs and other materials for personal use.

Texas Republican Rep. Joe Barton, who took command of the House Energy and Commerce Committee in February, said current law should be scaled back to allow consumers to make personal copies and exercise other long-established "fair use" rights, now prohibited under a 1998 digital-copyright law.

"The balance between consumers' rights and producers' rights over copyright material needs to be restored," Barton said at a hearing on the issue.

Barton plans to schedule a vote on a bill that would scale back the 1998 law, a spokeswoman said. The bill, sponsored by Virginia Democratic Rep. Rick Boucher, has drawn only 15 co-sponsors since it was introduced early last year, but several other committee members voiced their support at the hearing.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act has won praise from software companies and other content creators, who maintain that hacking around their digital locks should be outlawed in an age when perfect digital copies of their works can spread instantly across the globe through the Internet.

The law has been invoked to block software that would allow consumers to copy DVDs and electronic books. It has also been used by makers of printer ink-jet cartridges and garage-door openers to shut down rivals and at least one programmer has been jailed under the law.

Critics say the law assumes all consumers who want to copy a DVD onto their laptops will sell that copy on the black market, even though the vast majority have no intention of doing so.

"I am, like other consumers, a profit center for these businesses and it is about time they treated us with a little respect," said Allan Swift, a former congressman who said he has been making mix tapes for friends for 50 years.

The movie industry’s top lobbyist warned that loosened copyright laws could devastate the industry as he brandished a bootleg copy of the film "Runaway Jury."

"The honest people will do right, but dishonest people will not do right and, in the digital age, that is a devastation I just don’t want to comprehend," said Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America.

Boucher’s bill would allow consumers to break digital locks for personal use and allow academics to crack them for research purposes. It would also require content creators to label copy-protected works accordingly.

A Barton spokeswoman said she did not know when the committee would vote on the measure.

Police Say Students Arranged Fight on Web

In a computer-age version of "West Side Story," rival gang members battled it out in the street in a rumble organized over the Internet.

Nearly three dozen people, including 27 high school students, were arrested this week after being indicted in the March 3 brawl in Garland, a Dallas suburb. Several people were injured, including one person who suffered a broken arm.

"Gangs already have their own alphabet, their own language, their own hand signals, so why not use the Internet?" said Tod Burke, a criminal justice professor at Radford University in Virginia. "Is this case unusual? Yes. But what I’m afraid is going to happen, this is probably just the beginning of it."

Using their home computers, the gangs traded insults in a profanity-laced chat room, then decided to fight, setting the time and the place over the Internet, Garland police officer Joe Harn said.

In the skirmish, gang members battled with more old-fashioned weapons:

fists, baseball bats, shovels, authorities said.

Detectives used the chat room to help find suspects.

"For the most part, it's nothing but cursing on it. Some of them actually signed in with their true names, so that helped us identify people," Harn said.

A videotape made by one of the participants also helped investigators identify those in the brawl.

It is relatively common for gangs to use the Internet to threaten and challenge rivals, said Jared Lewis, director of Know Gangs, a Wisconsin-based organization that educates police and the public about gangs.

"This is the first time I've heard where you've had a fight result, where the gangs actually met," Lewis said. "It doesn't surprise me at all that it's happened. It's just the scale that does surprise me."

Lewis said that increased use of the Internet by gangs is fueled in part by chat rooms and bulletin boards on gangsta rap artists' Web sites.

Gang-intelligence officers in Garland, a suburb of more than 200,000, said they plan to pay more attention to Internet sites now.

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